[765 cont.]

A 2 55 Devlet-khan, Tatema, Kistaman, Tepsike, Gosop'o khuraya (= round prince's-daughter), etc.

A 766 Death. In Abkhazia, when someone has been struck by lightning, he is laid in a coffin, and this is hung on a tree (as in old Lazistan, see above, p. 671 [untranslated], in Siberia, and other places), until the body has completely decayed; then the bones are buried.

C 766 In the sixteenth century the Cherkess used to seat the body of a nobleman, after having removed the entrails, on a tall, wooden bedstead in the field for a week. The two nearest relatives stood nearby, and on the bed was a girl who brushed away the flies with a silk cloth stuck on an arrow, while the first of his wives sat at his head without weeping. Afterwards the body, with clothing and weapons, was laid in a split and hollowed tree trunk, along with part of the gifts, silver vessels, bows, arrows, and the like, which relatives, friends, and serfs had brought, and set on the ground at the burial-place; over it was raised a mound whose height showed how much esteem the deceased had enjoyed. As a sacrifice for the dead, the innocence of a twelve to fourteen-year-old girl was offered, which the youths attempted to take by force as she lay on an ox-skin. After the burial a servant led the dead man's bridled horse to the grave on several days and called him to eat three times.

A 2 764 Now deceased persons are laid to rest with the assistance of a Christian or Mohammedan clergyman (mullah). The lamentation for the dead at the coffin and amidst the clothing and weapons of the deceased, the feast for the dead, etc. resemble the customs of the Khevsur (see p. 737 and following [untranslated]); here, however, male mourners, too, kneel at the coffin. While the body is being carried to the grave, a rope is thrown over the roof and pulled back and forth in order to determine whether the house, which has been severely shaken by the departure of the deceased, still stands firm (as in Mingrelia). In earlier times, the Cherkess also threw the right ear of his horse into the grave, after they had first put the reins into the dead man's hands and led the horse around the grave three times (cf. p. 80). The mother, the wife, and the foster

A 765 [765 cont.] The mother, the wife, and the foster mother mourn at the grave for forty days in the morning and in the evening, and for the same length of time, or sometimes for a whole year, food for the deceased is put on the table during meals.

[766] The first memorial service takes place on the fortieth day, the second one during the second year, usually in the autumn. On the evening preceding the latter (ap's-khuvra = assigning to the soul), the clothes, the horse with the saddle, and the weapons of the deceased are laid out, there is mourning in the house and at the grave, and sacrificial animals are slaughtered. A party of village members in mourning clothes and barefoot bring up animals and food; among them a man carries lighted candles on a twig-shaped holder, as do the oxen on their horns. The next day the horse of the dead man is led around in a circle three times in a field, and the relatives follow A [775] it, lamenting in mourning clothes; after this, the soul of the dead, which until then had remained invisibly among them for the time being, has finally departed from the earth. After the memorial A [171] feast the youths and men hold oratory exercises, shooting matches, and races, as among the Khevsur (see p. 738 [untranslated], and below, p.30).

A 764 The burial grounds, which contain the graves for each kin group, usually lie on elevations and are fenced in. Small houses of planks with shingle roofs--in contrast to the usual building style--are erected over the graves, which are themselves lined with boards, and fruit trees are planted nearby.

A 775 Among the Abkhaz, too, there is the belief that the souls of the dead have the same needs as the living, and for this reason they build these grave-shelters, lay slices of melon and cucumber on the graves, and for a year after death put food for them on the table during the meals. At the second A [765] memorial celebration the father of the house places in the yard a millet-dumpling over which wine has been poured and pieces of the heart and liver from the sacrificial animal. If the souls are neglected, they come to the house at night and whistle, A [753] whereupon food and wine is given to them. When the souls, the "outer ones," are angered, they bring about weakness and sickness among animals and men. Then one tries to console

[766 cont.] Then one tries to console the dead (angip'sngis) with prayer and sacrifices of meat and sour milk, which are laid on a cloth under a protective roof near some clothing and, in the case of female souls, trinkets, and begs for the recovery of the stricken person, who stands nearby and whose back is stroked for "deliverance" (azati).

When someone has drowned and his body has been buried, his soul is supposed to have remained in the water and must be fetched out. For this purpose they hang a leather shoulder-sack on a silk string over the stream in question, and men and women stand on the back singing and playing the harp to entice the soul into the sack. As soon as the soul has slipped in, a man jumps into the water and ties the sack shut, he then takes it to the grave and allows the soul to enter into its body through a hole.

[767] Religious beliefs and customs. Christianity is supposed to have been brought to Abkhazia, according to the Georgian chronicle of Vakhtang V, about 40 A.D., but apparently did not find favorable soil, since there are no reports of successful propagation until the time of the Byzantine occupation of the coastal cities. Emperor Justinian had a large church erected at Bitshvinta (pitzunda) where the Abkhaz Catholics and the Georgian governor then had their residence. At the end of the seventeenth century most of the Abkhaz were induced by the Tatars to take up Islam, and only the Samurakhan remained faithful to Christianity, but the many ruins of churches and monasteries are regarded by them as holy places to which they make pilgrimages and on which they take oaths. Also several customs may have a Christian origin: use of wax tapers and incense, colored Easter-eggs, respect for the sign of the cross, fasting, eating of pork, and the like. The Cherkess, in whose lands few remains of churches are to be found, gave up Christianity for Islam later than the Abkhaz; the Kabardin were converted to it toward the middle of the eighteenth century, and the others, under Turkish influence, toward the end of the eighteenth century. Both religions, however, have exerted as little influence as among the mountain Georgians, for the old indigenous beliefs and customs have never been given up.

The gods of the Abkhaz are very similar to those of the Osset (see pp. 86 f.). A supreme god (Antsar mz) is ruler over

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'mothers' and 'God', are often pronounced in the same manner." [1] [196] [190]
"During the study of the different religious beliefs and customs of the Abkhasians," he continues, "we came across the following phrase among others: *antswà* r-*mərzə*—'the cause, guilt of God' (properly, 'the guilt or fault of gods,' N. Janashia). The roman r is the pronominal characteristic of the third person plural. . . . The above quoted construction—*antswà r-mərzə*—could not have been arrived at unless the word *antswà* was used in the plural," justly remarks the author; "were it in the singular, we would have had *antswà i-mərzə*."

Abkhasians regard the elements and manifestations of nature as rational beings. Each of these rational beings has his own gods, whom the orthodox Abkhasian serves honestly, in the light of his understanding. If the name of one, or more, of these gods has been forgotten by the people, he, the god, is simply called *inkhwà*[*]—"his 'part', 'share' of mother," or they use the full form *intswakhwà*—"his part of God," while under the influence of Christianity—*inəkhakhwà*, in which *akhwà* denotes "part, share, dole" and *anəkha*—"icon." [2]

In Abkhasian conception, God is One, but He is of infinitely numerous "doles" or parts. Not only each manifestation of nature, but also each tribe, family, or individual, has his own part of God, just as each Christian has his guardian-angel. The Abkhaz says *sɔntswakhwà*—"my (*s-* is the pronominal characteristic of the first person singular) part of God"; *untswakhwà*—"thy (*u-* is the pronominal characteristic of the second person singular) part of God." And it should be noted that one may offend against not only one's own "part of God", but also against "the part of God" of one's neighbour, or relation, etc. . . . [193]

This conception of the Deity as a multiform being appears to account for the fact that the word *antswà* is in the plural. Here I will note that such a conception evidently did not prevail among the Abkhasians only; its traces remain to this day even among the [191]

[1] P. Dcharaia, *On the Relation of the Abkhasian lang. to the Japhetic* (in Russian) in *Materials for Japhetic Linguistics*, St. Pb., 1912, vol. iv, p. 65. 104

[*] The combination "*ʰʷ*" represents a sound uttered with one breath impulse. The underlined "*ʰʰ*" ("*ʰʰ*") constitutes actually a trigraph in which the digraph "*ʰʰ*" represents a guttural fricative equivalent to German *ach-laut*, and the *linea subscript* a hard diffusive glottal spirant, which is not to be identified with the palatal (front) "*ʰ*", and which is represented elsewhere, independently, as "*h*"; the combination "*ʰʰ*" (= *ʰʰ* + *h*) is thus a deeper guttural, glottal, sound than the German *ach-laut*. The labial semi-vowel "*ʷ*" represents the labialization of the preceding "*ʰʰ*". "*Khw*" thus represents a labialized variety of "*ʰʰ*". See N. Y. Marr, *The Abkhasian Analytical Alphabet*, pp. 48 and 39; see also his *Abkhasian-Russian Dictionary*, Leningrad, 1926, pp. xxxv-xxxvi. [Translator's Note.]

[2] I. Javakhishvili derives *anəkha* from the Georgian word *khati*, icon. May not *khati* be derived from the Abkhasian verb *akhaʷ'ərə*? *A-khà*, head, *aʷ'ərə*, to give, to set, to level the head. Or is it a mere consonance?

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Georgians. Thus, according to Iv. Gv. Gomelauri, the well-known pedagogue, in K'iziqi (Signakh district, in Kakhet'i) they say: *tchemi dsili ghmert'i; sheni dsili ghmert'i*, "my part of God," "thy part of God." A. Dsuladze, who is well acquainted with the life of the Gurian people, told me that similar expressions were also used in Guria.

Further, as the reader will see for himself, the word *an*, "mother" constitutes part of the names of a series of gods, and several of these names are of the feminine gender, as Dcharaia has also justly noticed. In this connection I should like to direct the attention of the reader to the names of two gods, namely, *jabrdn* and *zhwabrdn*.* Each of these words has in our opinion several connotations; *jabrdn* is compounded of several words: *j* is the root from the word *a-j-ma*, a goat; *a-b*, father; *r* the pronominal characteristic of the third person plural; and *an*, mother. Thus *jabrdn* denotes "father and mother of goats", i.e. "(fore)parents of goats", or "god of goats". In the same manner *zhwabrdn* is compounded of *a-zhw*, a cow, and of the components just explained, so that the whole denotes "father and mother of cows", i.e. "(fore)parents of cows".[1] It seems to me that at the dawning of their religio-philosophical life, the Abkhasians evidently worshipped equally both their male and female ancestors. How strong is this ancestor-worship among the Abkhasians even to-day will be shown in my work *The Ancestor Cult*.

Thus, as is the case of Dcharaia, I think that the word *antswd* is derived from the word *an* in the plural. I also think that the name *antswd*, of the Supreme Being, arose from the deification of ancestors. At first it was evidently used with the plural termination, and in the feminine gender, and later, in the course of time, from "many mothers-gods" arose the One God *antswd*.[2] The changing of the gender of gods is often observed in the religions of the primitive peoples, and *antswd* therefore constitutes no exception.[3]

Antswd is One, but He is plural as to His parts. All the gods, of which we will speak below, are subject to and obey Him as the Supreme Being. In the tales, I was told, it is said that *antswd's* mother came from a Megrelian princely *gvari* of Mkheidze, the Abkhasian form of

* The combination *zhw* is to be uttered with one breath impulse; it represents a labialised variety of "*zh*" (= French "*j*"). Cf. "*tsw*", p. 118, n. *. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] Such a morphological interpretation does not appear admissible, as the word *an*, if in this case it denotes "mother", is never combined with *ab*, father, but governs the first part of the compound word, *jab* and *zwhab*, which, judging from the relative infix *r*, is assumed to be plural. [Note by the Editor, *Khr. V.*]

[2] And not *bntswa*, as it should have sounded and does really sound "mothers". See above, pp. 118–19. [Ed., *Khris. Vos.*]

[3] If this supposition turns out to be justified, and the word *antswd* is not of Sumero-Babylono-Assyrian origin (from *An*, *Ana*), its significance as a term employed in the history of religious beliefs generally will be greatly increased.

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[796] When the woman places the dough on the hearth, she holds over it a [262] pure *sulguni* (a round of cheese),[1] from the centre of which she cuts out a small round piece and places it in the middle of the maizebread; with the exception of this middle part, the maizebread is lenten. When placing the dough on the hearth, she scatters bits of it, first in the direction of the sea, and then towards the mountains; and, as if calling to the goats, she says, *reyt, reyt* (the goat call), and mutters the following prayer: "Thou, *jabràn*, the great part of the great [539] god (*Àyt'ar intswakhwədù jabràn*)! Grant us the warmth of thine eyes and of thy heart. Be the guardian of our herds! Bear goodwill unto us so that no harm should befall our herds, except their old moulted wool and old dung!" Apart from this introduction, which is always used, each says an improvised prayer. After this is over, as if calling to the goats they again exclaim, *reyt, reyt*, turning alternatively towards the sea and the mountains.

When the maizebread is baked, and the goats have returned from the fields, the eldest man in the family prays to god *jabràn*, muttering approximately the formula quoted above. The whole family joins him in uttering *dămen*, and the candles are lighted.

It is to be noted that during the prayer the participants also invoke the "god" *mkyamgaria*,* and say: "May thy bounty never fall short [199] on us." It seems to me that this deity is no other than the "Megre- [196] lianized" angels Michael and Gabriel (Geo. *Mik'el da Gabrieli*), with whom Christianity endeavoured, in vain, to replace Àyt'ar and his "parts" of gods; up to this day the pagan deities still take precedence, although they also pray to *mkyamgaria*.

The maizebread is first cut into four parts with two strokes of the knife, and only afterwards into small pieces; the neighbours [621] are not forgotten either, a piece being sent to each. The maizebread [852] is baked in rhododendron (*à-k'wazhwə*)† leaves.

2. *Zhwabràn* (god of cows)[2]

[196] This rite is performed in the same manner as jabràn. The prayer begins thus: "Thou *zhwabràn*, the great part (of the great deity)

104 * The palatal or mid-lingual semi-vowel "*y*" in "*k'y*", "*gy*", as also in "*ky*", "*wy*", "*shy*", "*qy*", etc., met with in this article, lingualizes or iotizes the preceding consonant sound, the combinations "*k'y*", "*gy*", etc, representing lingualized or iotized varieties of "*k'*", "*g*" (pronounced hard, as in "go"), etc. For the pronunciation of simple radical sounds see p. 328. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

† See p. 131, note *.

In Abkhasian *àtshyashwə*, pure cheese; cf. Megrelian (I. Kipshidze, *The Megrelo-Russian Dictionary*, s.v. *aul'ari*) *tsk'ebe*, which is also an Abkhasian expression, denoting "pure (*a-tsh'ya*), good (*à-bza*)".

[1] In Guria this observance is known under the name of *boulobe* (an abstract form of *bouli*, cowhouse) or *tlovebe*; the latter probably has some connection with St. George of Ilori. The Gurians often call a cow *tlova*. In Megrelia the god of cattle-breeding is known as *Zhini-Aul'ar*. [191]

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sacrificial maize-cakes. Also on this day, in the early evening, are prepared from the above-mentioned leaven many *á-khwazhwə*, and three loaves, made in the shape, respectively, of the moon, the sun, and *alaĥwara*.[1] In the latter are placed as many *ahlakŭt-s* (little wooden hammers, models of those used in threshing millet, or maize) as there are women in the family and an extra one symbolizing the desire for their increase. This correlation of the number of hammers with the number of women in the family arose, of course, from the fact that the threshing of millet was the woman's job. Soups of phasel and of fresh nettle (*á-khwats*) are also prepared. On this day no edible herb of any kind is allowed to be consumed, or used in cooking; *dsásəm*, the Abkhasians say, that is, "it is not proper," "it is forbidden" (in Megrelian *vashiners*).

Late in the afternoon, when the cattle have returned from the fields, the prayers begin.

(*a*) *Antswá-ĥwa* (for God).[2]

The whole family gathers together. On the threshold of the house, *áishwa*, is placed a long and narrow table (in Megrelian *tabaki*), on which are laid all the eatables described above. Behind this little table stands the head of the family, and behind him all the other members. The wax candles are lighted. The head of the family takes three *á-khwazhwə*, and, addressing *Antswá*, God, prays that His favours and bounties may be showered upon his family, etc. The family repeat with him, *áámen*. These cakes are put aside.

(*b*) *Àyt'ar*.

After this the head of the family takes three new *a-khwazhwə*, and says: *Wa, Àyt'ar—bzhwáyt'ar! bzhyə-n'khak' zznáp-yanŭ, bzhyə—tswəmzák' zzakáar—áso*, etc., "*O, Àyt'ar—seven Àyt'ar, in the hands of whom are seven icons (to whom are subject seven gods), and to whom are lit seven candles,"—be thou the guardian of our herds! Multiply them so that we may milk seven men's load of milk! Let no harm come to our herd, except the old wool and old dung!* etc. The introduction, given in Abkhasian, is uttered by all, while everybody improvises the rest of the supplication as best they can, repeating the mystic number seven every minute. As is shown by the introduction *Àyt'ar* is the head of a group of seven gods. The number seven appears in many prayers.[3]

[1] *Alaĥwara*—a large mortar (Geo. *tchaduri*) in which millet (*ghomi*) is husked.

[2] *Ikwa* is an abbreviated form of the word denoting "he says"; cf. the Russian *gut* heard in the existing colloquial speech.

[3] All this, and the fact that the Abkhasians up to this day still pray to the moon and the sun, makes us wonder whether the septenary *Àyt'ar* is closely connected with the Babylono-Assyrian septenary of gods, particularly as the names of the gods *Aa, Anu—Antswá*, and *Ishtar—Àyt'ar*, are very similar, while the moon and the sun are included in both pleiades.

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The Megrelians also know this septenary, *shk'vit'-ul-i*, in honour of which the majority of families let loose a cow with a pierced ear. Her milk is not used for food. The bullock is offered in sacrifice, while the heifer is reared. The well-known Pshav *Kviria* is, perhaps, related to Megrelian Àyt'ar. I have pointed out above that among the Megrelians the god of cattle-breeding is called *Zhini Ant'ar*. *Ant'ar* is the Abkhasian *Àyt'ar*, while *zhini*, in Megrelian, "high," "heavenly," is equivalent to Abkhasian *khikh*. The Abkhasians, however, appear to have split up *Zhini Ant'ar* into two gods, *Àyt'ar* and *Khikh*. They appeal for help to the latter in the spring, when the cattle are taken to the mountain pastures. They pray to him under the shadows of trees. On four pillarets are placed poles, which are covered with leaves of trees, particularly of the wild hazel tree, the oak, or yoke-elm. A cheese curd wrapped in chestnut tree bark is placed on this table (*ashwamkyd'*)* which is covered with greenery; on it is also placed *dtchamak'wa*, a kind of millet porridge, cooked with cheese. In front of it is also placed milk gruel. Women are not allowed to be present. The head of the family, standing with uncovered head in front of this green table, called *ashwamkyd'*, prays that *Khikh*, the great part of the great deity Àyt'ar, may increase his cattle and send all good things. While praying he spills a little of the gruel towards the sea and towards the mountains, uttering *wootsw*. The prayer over, he takes the cheese curd and passes over it cross-wise a hazel "knife", which is really a stick cut into a tapering, knife-like shape, after which he actually cuts the cheese curd with a real knife.[1] This ceremony of prayer is followed by a dinner, the remains of which are not cleared away. Three of the supports or legs of *ashwamkyd'* are cut off (each with one stroke), the fourth remains there untouched. It seems to me probable that the table itself received its name from this act of cutting. Megrelians also know this *ashwamkyd'*, which they call *sumket* (*sumi keti*), "three sticks," derived, perhaps, from *sumkvat'*, in which case it would denote "three cuttings" (*kvat'* < *kvat'ua* = to cut, to fell), i.e. "cut with three strokes."[2]

The Georgian Mountaineers also have their *Anator-i*.

(c) *Alèshkintr* (*alèskintr*).

These cakes are also put aside. The prayer now takes three new

* The combination *shw* represents a labialized variety of "*sh*"; cf. "*shw*", p. 120, note *. In *ashwamkyd'* the "*sh*" is not only labialized, but also lingualized or lotised, which lingualization is not, however, represented in the transcription. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] By using the wooden knife, the Abkhasian probably pays tribute to that very ancient time when his ancestors used that kind of knife.

[2] If the first part *shwe* represents the Megrelian word "three", one should keep in mind not the "K'art'lianized" form *sumi*, but the original, Tubal-Kainian *shumi*; see Marr, *From the Journies to Svanis* (in Russian), in *Khristianskii Vostok*, ii, pp. 17–18. (Editor, *Khrist. Vost.*)

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796 *à-khwazhw* and entreats god *Alèshkintr* to grant the house faithful dogs—those best friends of man and reliable watchers of his weal; the prayer at the same time spills some of the hot *a-k'warɔpà* or *a-*
[260] *k'warpà* (a thick broth of *à-khwazhw*, or millet) towards the sea and some towards the mountains, uttering "*Wootsw!* Burn out the tongue
[758] of the evil-speaker, the eyes of the evil-eyed", and continues his prayer.
[716] In the opinion of the commission, *Alèshkintr* is also "part" of *Àyt'ar*. *Ala* denotes dog; *shkintr*, however, is incomprehensible.

The commission explained that "dog" was mentioned before
[23] "man" on account of the former being more capable of loyalty to a master than the latter.

671 It should be noted that the common law values the blood of a
685 dog in proportion to that of its owner; the blood of a baron's dog is
825 equal to that of a baron, of a peasant's to that of a peasant, etc.

539 From the lips of K. Dolbaia (Abkh. Delba), an 80-year-old Abkha-
23 sian, who possesses an expert knowledge of the Abkhasian language, I wrote down the following tale:—

"In ancient times, when Abkhasia was inhabited by giants and devas (daevas), Aslan, one of the giants, would not leave the devas in peace. Once, when he was asleep, the devas crept up stealthily, bound him with silk laces, blinded and killed him, and threw him into a pit as deep as a well. On their return from their usual hunting expedition, his dogs discovered their master, but they could not pull him out of the well. They fell upon an ox-cart driver who happened to be passing by, and compelled him to rescue their master from the well and unbind him. The dogs licked Aslan for three days and three nights, and so brought him back to life and restored his sight." [1]

The following superstition prevails among the Abkhasians. If
[801] someone, noticing the heavens bursting open, succeeds in uttering *Làri, vàri, khàzà, jkhwàri*, he will have all his wishes fulfilled. Only one woman was honoured with this great good fortune, the widow of a Mukvabba. *Làri* is interpreted as *lala* which denotes dog; *vàri*
[792] (*vàri* from *aowyà*,* man) as man; *khàzà* as whey; *jkhwàri* as the crust of millet porridge; uttered together they are supposed to mean "make me rich". My Abkhasian advisers repeatedly emphasized that the dog was mentioned first because of its unexampled loyalty and fidelity to man, his master.

796 (*d*) *Amza-nɔkwa*, Prayer to the Moon.
796 The supplicant takes the moon-shaped cake and says: "Thou,

* See p. 122, note *. According to Marr, the throat participates vigorously in the pro/uction of this composite or diffusive sound, and in a way as if the sound of the
[104] guttural "ɔ" (the ancient Arabic '*ain*) were also heard. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] The Academician N. Y. Marr has kindly directed my attention to Moses of
[171] Khoren, who describes how by order of Semiramis, the dogs of *Aralìz* (cf. *Alèshkintr*) licked the corpse of *Aru* or *Arsès*, the Armenian Prince, in order to revive him.

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small salt *akwakwdr*. They then go out into the garden and eat their scones in silence in the dark, at the same time entreating *Làmilaà* to bestow upon them a happy married life. Whoever finds the "stake of happiness" in his or her scone must celebrate this stroke of luck by giving a party for all the participants. On the following day the *Làmilaà* party is given at the house of the lucky one. After consuming the little *akwakwdr* all go back into the house and sit down to a supper which is also an occasion for gaiety. In order to maintain the feeling of thirst at its strongest, no one is allowed to drink anything. The Abkhasians believe that the thirsty person will be given a drink by the one with whom he or she is fated to share conjugal life. In such manner do the young people of Abkhasia tell their fortunes.[1]

II. Àmshap'

In this chapter I have collected together all those rites grouped around the festival of Easter, called in Abkhasian *Àmshap'*.[2] The *Àmshap'* celebrations began[3] two weeks before Easter Sunday, and continued for exactly three weeks, during which time custom forbade working in the field, except in the cotton field and the kitchen garden. On Sunday, two weeks before Easter Day, the Abkhasians decorated their houses with the first spring flowers, and this Sunday is called *aioba*, which is derived, probably, from the Megrelian *aia*, violet. Until *aioba*, playing football or other games was forbidden. After that day, however, seasonal games were in full swing. Dressed in their finest attire, the whole population gave themselves up to public sports. Among the most popular pastimes were football, wrestling, stone throwing, trick-riding, dancing, singing, and *akyabir* (in Geo. *riktap'ela*, "game of skittles," according to Tchubinashvili's or Tchubinov's Dictionary).

The following Sunday—Palm Sunday—the Abkhasians call *baioba* (a "Megrelianization"). The name is derived from *a-baia*, a yellow flower which grows profusely in the fields of Abkhasia in the early spring.[4] On this day also the Abkhasians decorated their houses with flowers, particularly with *abala*.

[1] *Anaap'a dzw* has its double in Guria and Imeret'i *bedis-kveri*, cracknel of fate, which is known also to the Tiflis Armenians. I think the Pshav *dzadzola* arose on this ground.

[2] It is, in my opinion, a compound word, consisting of *amsh*, day, and *ap'* (*yap'u*), accepted, appointed, fixed; *Àmshap'* thus denotes "pre-ordained day" (Geo. *saghebuli dghe*).

[3] These celebrations are no longer observed; they are traditional, and I am describing them from memory, or from the words of the Commission.

[4] According to Tchubinashvili (Tchubinov), and to R. Erist'avi (Eristov), *baia* is crows-foot, *ranunculus*. Erist'avi, considering the word to be Megrelo-Imero-Gurian, gives as its K'art'(l)ian equivalent *tskhviris-satskhela*. The word *a-baia*, in Abkhasian *a-mdrdà*, is, according to the botanists of the Sukhum Botanical Garden, the equivalent of the Russian *lyutik tolbl*.

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1. *Adzɔ̀rga-khwasha*

Either during the night before *baiobə*, or, according to some members of the Commission, on the Wednesday evening of Passion-week, is observed the rite of binding legs with wool threads. Having supped early, the family retires to bed, each individual thrusting out his or her right leg from under the blanket. The eldest woman in the family stands on a stool in the middle of the room, and spins thread from wool. She does her work in silence. Having spun the required quantity, she quietly approaches the beds, and binds with this thread the right leg of each of their occupants, murmuring: "May God grant thee to see such days for a hundred years!" *Adzɔ̀rga* (more correctly, *adzəga*) denotes a thick thread; *a-khwasha*—Friday, so that this rite was in former days, probably, observed on Fridays. The threads were afterwards burnt on the fire under the small cauldron in which was boiled the meat of the sacrificial animal, on Easter Day.

2. *K'wab-gharghar**

As soon as the binding ceremony was finished, the woman seized a copper cauldron, or a copper basin, and struck it like a gong, shouting at the top of her voice: "We have beaten! We have beaten!" The whole family then ran out into the garden, shouting *shwaḥ'waf'weyt!* "We have beaten you (outstripped)!" The "beaten" neighbours, annoyed to find themselves "beaten", immediately fell upon them, and a mock battle ensued. The battle was fought, of course, entirely as a joke, and with great merriment. In ancient times, a whole village often went to "battle" against another, beating copper cauldrons and basins. The "battle" was followed by dances and fun-making continuing till the dawn. *A-k'wab* denotes cauldron of copper, *gharghar*, knock, rap, clatter of a copper cauldron or basin.

3. *Aqaf'wara*

This Abkhasian term denotes the following superstition: an Abkhaz considers it a great misfortune if he hears the warbling or chirping of a swallow or the call of a cuckoo, before he has had his breakfast (or has at any rate partaken of salt); the bird will have "beaten" him, and this he regards as a great misfortune. In order to avoid this he eats salt, or something salt-flavoured immediately on rising from bed, which means that he has won the "contest".[1]

* The labial semi-vowel "w" in "*k'w*", "*t'w*", as also in "*hw*", "*fw*", etc., met with in this article, labializes the preceding consonant sound, the combination "*k'w*", "*hw*", etc., representing labialized varieties of "*k*", "*f*", etc. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] Georgians also have such a superstition.

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Notes and Considerations concerning Chapter II

1796 It is of great interest to determine which pagan cult approximates, under the name of *Àmshap'*, to Easter, the day of the Resurrection of Christ. I. Javakhishvili states in his well-known *History of the Georgian Nation* (in Georgian) that, according to Dubrovin, the Abkhasians called *Àmshap'* also *Mizitkhu*. In my opinion this is another form of the Abkhasian word *məzəkhwə̀*, i.e. " part of the moon," derived from *àmza*, moon, and *a-khwə̀*, dole, part, share. If this supposition is correct, *məzəkhwə̀* would denote " to give to the moon its share, part ", i.e. " praying to the moon." [1] It should be noted, however, that neither the members of the Commission nor anyone whom I questioned knew anything about this name of *Àmshap'*. It is to be assumed that this name was noted down from the lips of the Mountaineers among whom it had evidently been preserved. In further support of the possible close connection between *Àmshap'* [996] and the moon cult (and the " tree spirit ") there is also the fact that the most important role in these festivals is assigned to St. George of Ilori, to which saint, as Javakhishvili has proved in his aforementioned work, is assimilated the moon cult. The procuring by this saint of a bullock, its " purification " by leading it three times from the mountains to the sea and back, the dedication to him of the cow *adzàtwə̀*, and, finally, the Gurian name of *zhwabrdn*, *Iloroba*, prove that St. George is closely connected with the Abkhasian pleiade. Here is yet another curious fact. In the village of Bandza there is a church dedicated to St. George and called Shourkari. There still exists here the following custom: On the Monday [2] following Low Sunday, after the domestic offering, the populace repair to the church, and on their way, singing *Kyrie eleison*, they uproot a tree without the use of any implement, carry it three times around the wall enclosing the church, and offer it to St. George. The tree is then left within the church enclosure until the next year when it is replaced by a fresh one. This, in my opinion, symbolizes the victory of St. George over the moon (= *t'ut'a* in Megrelian, and over the " tree ").[3] Such a custom also [191] prevails in the village Opshkvit'i, in Lower Imeret'i, where on the 23rd April the populace offers, in the same manner as at Bandza, a tree to St. George.[4]

1796 Judging from the description of *The Supplication of the Leybaa*, 1971 by the priest N. Pateyna, which has been preserved in its purest state,

[113] [1] Cf. N. Y. Marr, *On the Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians*, p. 133 (or its translation in this Journal, pp. 175–6.)

[2] " Monday " in Megrelian is *t'ut'asàkhà*, that is, the day of the moon (I. Kipshidze, op. cit., s.v. *dghe*). Noteworthy is Lamberti's description of the fear of the moon by the Megrelians.

[3] According to the information given me by Sh. P'aghava and El. Ot'khmeturi.

[4] *O-pshkvit'-i*, judging from its form, is of Megrelian origin.

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Wednesday was the day of the prayer to the tree spirit, with both the Abkhasians and the K'art'vels (and Megrels),[1] which is partly confirmed by the Megrelian name of this day, i.e. *jumashkha*; the latter consists of *juma* and *shkha* (Geo. *dghe*). What does the first component word denote? May it not be derived from the Abkhasian word *ajəma*, she-goat? The Pshavs have preserved the more salient *jumaghis jvari*, wherein *jumaghi* = *ajəmagh* denoting "goat-seed, goat-male", he-goat. This term may have been obtained from the custom of the Abkhasians of dedicating, or offering, exclusively, a goat to the tree spirit. This supposition finds further confirmation in the legend of Dsatchkhur, which procured exclusively for its festivals the wild goat (male).

One may also note the concordance between the names of some days in the Megrelian language, and the fact that it is just on these days that the cult is observed of those gods to whom these days are dedicated. Thus on the Monday (*t'ut'ashkha*) the Abkhasians offer a sacrifice to the moon; on the Wednesday (*jumashkha*) they observe the cult of the tree, and on the Tuesday (*t'akhashkha*) the cult of the mother-earth.[2]

III. NÀN-ḫWA

The Abkhasians call the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin (15th August) (*a*) *Nàn-ḫwa*.[3] They observe with great reverence both *Nàn-ḫwa* and the Lent of the Assumption. With *Nàn-ḫwa* are connected the following superstitions of the Abkhasians:—

(*a*) *Àwyəst'ăd-ḫkhəra* (Meg. *Dchindchat'oba*)

Abkhasians associate the night before the 1st August with increased activity on the part of evil spirits *ăwyəst'ăd*, demons; and

[1] N. Janashia evidently here uses *k'art'vel* as a generic term, including Megrels, but etymologically and linguistically such use of the term is definitely inadmissible. (Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

[2] The last two comparisons are made by the author, because for *jumashkha* he had also another etymology in connection with the Abkhasian *a-j*, oak, with which he identifies the Megrelian *ja*, tree; while in the first part (*t'akha-*) of the word *t'akhashkha*, he saw the Megrelian *dikha*, earth, soil. These doubtful etymologies have been eliminated. On the other hand, cf. *nertchi*, in I. Kipshidze's *Grammar of the Megrelian Language*, s.v., where this term is interpreted as "the basis of something, or the ground on which a house stands", and since the prayer dedicated to *nertchi*, or "master, lord" *nertchi*, as to a kind of deity, cannot be performed in a house with a wooden floor, I. Kipshidze concluded "that *nertchi* is god of the earth", in which supposition he was to a certain extent supported by definitions of the same word, given by lexicographers (S. S. Orbeliani: "the external side of the bottom"; Tchubinov (I): "bottom, the lower part of a vessel"; Tchub (II): "the lower part of the vessel, of the pitcher"). These materials N. Janashia supplements in his letter, dated 16th April, thus: "In Imeret'i *nertchi* denotes ceiling (see also V. Beridze, *Sitqvishona*, The Dictionary, s.v.), while in Megrelia, on the other hand, the rite is known under the name of *p'udeshi do nertchish ḫkvama*, 'the praying of the foundation and ceiling' if not 'of the floor'." (Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*)

[3] In my opinion *Nan(an)* denotes mother, and *ḫwa*, "says" (from *ḫwara*, see above, p. 124, note 2), that is, "for the mother," "the mother's day."

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they, therefore, take precautionary measures to avoid becoming victims of the malignant will of the evil spirits. Nothing is left outside the house, or in the courtyard; nobody sleeps out of doors. To safeguard themselves from evil spirits, the superstitious attach pieces of wax to their hair. Crosses are made from *a-lakwə̀mkha* (Geo. *lekumkha*),[1] to which are appended acanthus leaves, and these are placed at the courtyard gates, house doors, the gates of the kitchen gardens and cornfields, the poultry and cow-houses, etc. Acanthus leaves are hung around the necks of the domestic animals. The Abkhaz is convinced that *dwyst'aă* dare not approach these crosses, which are also a protection against evil eyes.

During this night the evil spirits go out to look for booty, under the leadership of their mother, *Arapàp* (Meg. *rokapi*). On this expedition they are joined by human beings in whom evil spirits have taken their abode. Some of these evil spirits ride wolves or cats, and devour all the animals left outside by their owners who had no time, or had forgotten to drive them into shelter.[2] All evil spirits without exception stir abroad during this night; they wander growling from village to village and through the forests. For this reason it is easy to find out and catch them, and with this object youths go into the woods, where they make a large fire, using the wood of *a-lakwə̀mkha*. The youngsters hide behind the bushes and watch out to see if they can recognize those of their neighbours into whom an evil spirit has entered. It is believed that the demons never pass a bonfire without stopping and warming themselves a little by it. Often quarrels arise on this ground, with unpleasant consequences. This custom of seeking after the evil spirits, "demons," is called *Awyst'aă lòkhəra*, which denotes "the catching of the demon"; it is also known under the Megrelian name of *dchindchat'oba*. To this day an Abkhaz believes that an evil spirit can enter into, and remain in, a human body, particularly in that of an old woman.

The chief *dwyst'aă* is the eldest son of the sister of God, and that is why He, being a blood relation, cannot destroy him, although he may frighten him off with thunder. Here it will be appropriate to quote the following popular story:—

"At the time of the partition of the work between God and the devil, the former, exercising the right of seniority,[3] suggested to the devil that they should divide the world between them. The latter

[1] The Russian *krushina*, according to the botanists of the Sukhum Botanical Garden, that is, *alaternus* (R. Eristov mentions the plant *kushka*, but he does not explain it. Ed. *Khrist. Vost.*).

[2] To safeguard an animal from wild beasts when he strays in the forest, they "bind the mouth" of the wild animals as follows: a pair of scissors is tied and a suitable prayer is uttered. "A sure remedy."

[3] The younger *divides*, and the elder chooses.

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agreed. During the night God caused the earth to be covered with luxuriant vegetation. Captivated by the beauty of vegetation the devil suggested to God that the best way to divide the world between them would be for one to have the earth and the other the vegetation. God took as his share the earth, and the devil received the vegetation. God then ordered him to remove his vegetation immediately. Only now did the devil realize his mistake, which, however, he rectified thus: he restored the vegetation to God, and in return for it he begged and obtained from Him the right to the souls of those who fall from the trees, having climbed them without first praying to God for their safety. . . ."

(*b*) *Barbanjia* (*dchiakokona*)

Before sunset on the 14th August the Abkhasian youths light, in their respective courtyards, a fire of flax straw (at present, owing to the lack of this straw, they use dry fern, etc.). Each person leaps thrice through the flame of this fire, shouting " I have burnt the evil spirit; I have burnt the evil spirit ". By so leaping through the flame an Abkhaz " purifies " himself of the evil spirit. After they have leapt three times through the flame each throws a piece of salt into the burning fire, and then, altogether, they begin to beat the fire with sticks to extinguish it, at the same time shouting the above quoted words. At the conclusion of the whole operation, the neighbours inform each other of their victory over the evil spirit by firing a gun. This manner of destroying the evil spirits is called " the burning of the demon " or *Barbanjia*. The denotation of the word is incomprehensible to me.[1]

(*c*) *Nân-hwa*

On the day of the Assumption of the Holy Virgin, the " pure " (eldest) woman in the family prepares *a-tcha* (" a round bread stuffed with cheese "), boils a cock, and leads the whole family into the kitchen garden. Here they all kneel in front of the blossoming cucumber vine, and the eldest woman makes offering to Nan, saying: " the great Nan (*Nân-du*)! We who offer thee this sacrifice, established by our ancestors, humbly entreat thee to have mercy upon our house: increase it like the stars in the sky! " etc. The kneeling family repeat with her, *Âmen*. But no one knows who *Nan* (*Anan*) is; they only know that she is a goddess of procreation of the human race. Of the Mother of God there is no knowledge whatever.

[1] The Georgian equivalent is *Dchiakokona*, which is observed on Ash-Wednesday. *Dchiakokona*, according to Tchubinov, denotes " the leaping through the fire on Wednesday of Passion-week ".

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of the bees as a sign of her good disposition towards a given family placed an egg (the egg of *Anàna-gùnda*) in one of the hives. No matter how much honey they took from that hive, there would always be a plentiful supply of it.[1]

IV. K'IRSA

Christmas is one of the four chief holidays[2] of the year. Abkhasians call it *K'irsa* (Megr. *K'irse*), which denotes Christ. An Abkhaz considers it a great disgrace if he fails on this day to kill a goat or some other animal. On this day "the table is laid" also for the souls of ancestors.

(a) *Agwə-nə̀hwa*

For some families it is obligatory to make an offering early in the morning on this day to *Agwə-nə̀hwa*, for which *akwakwər* are baked. The supplicant entreats that *Agwə-nə̀hwa* grant them the warmth of his eyes and his heart. In translation the word denotes, "praying to heart." This "praying" is also known to the Gurians, under the name of "praying for the womb" (Geo. *Mutslis salotsavi*); Megrelians call it *Khatsitsi*.[3] According to I. Kipshidze, it is the New Year's Day breakfast.[4] In my opinion it is nothing more than a survival of the supplication described below.

(b) *Got'anùa* (*sharp'ə-nə̀hwa*)

Some *gvari*-s have preserved to this day the following custom. On Christmas Eve, the family go to bed very early; they rise, however, at midnight, and begin praying. Enough chickens are killed to provide one for every member of the family (blackbirds also may be used), or in their place a young goat; *akwakwər* baked. All this is offered to *Got'anùa*; the food is consumed immediately after the prayer is ended, and the remains, if any, are not left but burnt without fail. All return to bed. The dawn must find them asleep. In Megrelian *got'ənua* denotes morning-twilight, dawn, to grow light, to dawn, the Abkhasian equivalent of which is *sharp'-nə̀hwa*, the morning prayer; the Megrelian term, however, is more in use.

I quote here the following story: "A female slave of a family,

[1] *Anàna*, in my opinion, is derived from *an*, mother; *gùnda*, probably from *gundi*, a swarm, a collection of something.

[2] Namely, the New Year, Easter, the Assumption, and Christmas.

[3] *Khatsitsi—khatsitsi* is called also a bride. (Cf. I. Kipshidze, *Gram. of the Megrelian Language*, s.v. *khat'atsi*.) (Ed. *Khrist. Vostok.*)

[4] *Grammar of the Megrelian Language*, s.v. (where is also a reference to the explanation of the same word in Georgian by V. Beridze, *Sitqvisatvsa*, s.v., Ed. *Kh. V.*).

their enemies, the god ordered the bird *aqaqab* to watch over them; the Megrelians who have the same belief, call this bird *kakabi*.[1] As soon as this bird sights at a distance a hunter or some other enemy, it soars high up into the sky, and by screeching warns the game of the approach of danger. That is why this bird is always found near the beasts.

The god of the mountains demands respect. He punishes severely those bold enough to bathe in clear, transparent mountain streams. The Abkhaz shepherds do not, therefore, bathe in these streams, being afraid of drawing upon themselves the displeasure of the god of the mountains: the nude body is said to defile the waters of the mountain spirit.

3. *Azhwèyp'shad* (gods of beasts and hunting)[2]

Azhwèyp'shad are gods of beasts and of hunting. They dwell in impassable forests, and lead an ordinary family life. To them are subjected all game, and without their will no one can shoot bird or beast. These gods kill for themselves some wild animal, boil and eat its meat; they wrap the bones in its skin and then revive the animal by striking it with a wand. Only after an animal has been resurrected in this way is a hunter granted the right to shoot it, and then only the particular hunter for whom the gods have destined it: no one else, try as much as he will, can kill it. Of this the Abkhasians are aware, and they employ the following characteristic greeting when they encounter a fellow hunter: *zp'sə-aakhèw yùzp'shùr*, "Which is destined to die, that (animal) is waiting for thee!" the answer being, "For both of us is waiting!"

A few words may be said about the way in which Abkhasians divine the success or failure of their hunting on the day of the Assumption. Before starting out the hunter takes a sharp knife and repeatedly strikes the table, cutting nicks in it. Passing his palm over the table, he says: "Whether thou sayest fifteen, whether I say fifteen, whoever says fifteen (it will be) thirty, fifteen." If the nicks thus cut number exactly fifteen it is a good omen; the gods will reward him with game.

The Abkhasians learnt this method in the following manner. A hunter once followed a wild goat, but he could not shoot it. It led him into the thick of a wood, where he saw a huge cauldron, around which sat gods. They invited him to join them. Nearby stood a goat. They killed the latter and invited the hunter to partake of the meal. When the gods began to throw bones into the hide, the hunter concealed one of them, putting in its place a small stick (or a small knife,

[1] The word is consonant with the Georgian *Kakabi*, partridge.
[2] The term is construed as plural.

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of an analogical formation in a *sh*-root- (= creating, to create, whence the verbal noun *ashard*) word *ashatswà*, which represents an epithet of a deity, and is equivalent to Georgian *gamtcheni*, creator.[1] I have not heard this word used apart from its association with the word God. This root is usually used in its past-participle form. A popular Abkhasian expression is *antswà-harshàz*, Creator God, but the following phrases are also in common use:—*ashatswà irshaz*, by the Creator (lit. creators') created (said of something very pleasing), and *ashatswà irmshaz*, by the Creator (lit., creators') not created (said of something unpleasing). In these examples *ashatswà* is understood to be in the plural, which is unmistakably borne out by the pronominal particle r (*i-r-shaz*, *i-r-mshaz*) which indicates the plurality of the subject (the determinative word in our examples).

It may, however, be argued that the phrases just quoted are composite, and that the particle indicated, a fossilized morphe which has lost its meaning. We will therefore quote another phrase, *nas ashatswà irshàma art'*, "Is it possible that the Creator (lit. creators) created these?" (it was said of the animals), in which *ashatswà* is directly represented as the subject in the plural. This word, and the notion conveyed by it, must have simultaneously undergone the same metamorphosis as the basic name itself, i.e., they must have lost first the intrinsic and then the formal meaning; it became a simple plurale tantum, for instance, in the widely used name for a kind of sacrificial animal, *ashatswà-dzatwo*, the Creator's (lit. creators') sacrificial animal, in which we should have had, in accordance with the rules of the Abkhasian compound word-formation, the form *ashatswà-rdzatwo*. . . .

It is clear that in this case the result of the acute conflict between old and new ideas, and in connection with it, between dead and living forms, is far less definite than in the case of *antswà* itself. The changes to which the latter has been subjected have been more rapid; but nevertheless, owing to language inertia, we find facts which reveal the original meaning of the process of word-formation. One such fact, quoted by Uslar, is given above. Of no less interest, in my opinion, is an example I found: the heroine of a story which I noted down, bears the following name, *antswà rt'op'hà khànkwla*, that is "God (‖ gods)-their-daughter-Khakula" in other words, the god's daughter Khàkûla (Khàkûla being a girl's name). The same pronominal particle r (*r-t'op'hà*) explicitly indicates here that for the remote ancestors of the speaker, God represented the union of numerous forces.[2]

[1] In Megrelian, *odabadi*. See Janashia, *The Abkhasian Cult and Mode of Life* (in Russian) in *The Christian East*, St. Pb., 1916, vol. v, issue 3, p. 168. Also Marr, *On the Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians* (in Russian) in *The Christian East*, vol. iv, issue 1, p. 132.

[2] See also Dcharaia, op. cit., p. 32.

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Finally, it has already been noted[1] that this peculiar religious conception—in accordance with which, not only the supreme beings of the national pantheon, but even the elements (personified, of course), are forces of many parts, each one endowed with its own particular aspect, with its separate parts, must have been common to all the Georgian tribes proper. Thus, for instance, in the Summer of 1921, I heard, in the village Eredvi (in the district of Gori) the following expression:—*mashin gagvidsqra tchveni dsili ghmert'i*, "Then our part of god was angry with us"; and this year, in Tiflis, I overheard in the street:—*bnelashi ver vitsani, ai, ase venatsvale tchem dsil ghmert's*, "I did not recognize (him or it) in the dark, I swear by my part of God."

[1] Janashia, *The Religious Beliefs of the Abkhasians*, p. 78. [English translation, p. 119. Ed.] Expressions such as "my part of God," "my part of the Icon", are quite common among the Abkhasians. Of interest, in this connection, is the curse *dmtsebis tqvaot*, "may thy part of fire burn out." According to Mr. Marghania (Mtsa), the Shepherds in Abzhua, when grazing their sheep in the mountains, pray to the Marshania-s' part of God (*Marshyanas rom tqvahkhar*, because the guardian-god of these mountains is supposed to be the god (or part of god) of the Marshania *gvari*.